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Document Title: Same Body, New Clothes
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Course: Performing and Media Arts 1112
Course Title: Fans, Cult Audiences, and Camp

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Fall 2013 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

WINNER

The Knight Award for Writing Exercises recognizes excellence in short exercises and/or handouts designed to improve student writing. Appropriate topics may be drawn from the whole range of writing issues, large scale to small scale, such as development of theses, use of secondary sources, organization of evidence, awareness of audience, attention to sentence patterns (e.g., passive/active voice; coordination/ subordination), attention to diction, uses of punctuation, attention to mechanics (e.g., manuscript formats, apostrophes). Exercises and handouts may be developed for use in or out of class.

Submissions should comprise three parts: (1) A copy of the handouts or instructions that go to students. (2) An explanation of the exercise/ handout and of the principles behind it, addressed to future instructors who may use the material. (3) If possible, an example of a student response.

Submissions may range in length from one to four or five pages.

Winning entries will be deposited in a web accessible archive and made available to other instructors under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. (See creativecommons.org for more information about cc licensing.)

To facilitate future searching of the Institute's archive, we ask that you provide a brief descriptive abstract (about 75 words) of your document, and a short list of appropriate keywords that might not appear in the text. Examples might include terms like "rhetorical situation," "style," "citation," etc. **Any borrowings such as quotations from course texts or handbooks must be cited properly in the document itself.**

The two winning entries will receive \$350; second place winners (if any) will receive \$125.

Submissions are due in 101 McGraw Hall by Friday, December 20. No exceptions can be made.

Fall 2013 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

~Please Print Clearly. Do not staple. Use paper clips only~

Instructor's name

Seth Soulstein

Department

PMA

Course # and title

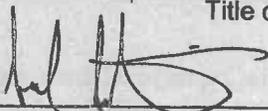
1112 - Fans, Cult Audiences, and Camp

Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of the writing exercises, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize. I also grant the Knight Institute permission to deposit the writing exercises in a web accessible archive and make them available under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. I am prepared to send electronic versions of my text to Donna O'Hara (dlo1@cornell.edu) in the Knight Institute. I understand that I will receive the award for my prize-winning essay upon submission of the electronic text.

SAME BODY NEW CLOTHES

Title of Writing Exercises

Instructor's signature



Date

20 Dec 2013

SAME BODY, NEW CLOTHES

Assignment:

In Assignment 2, you were asked to take an article from our anthology, *The Cult Film Reader*, and summarize it in 2–3 pages. That text -- your summary -- is now the main ingredient for this next exercise. Below is a list of prompts. For each prompt, your summary is the base text from which you will create your response.

1. Familiarize yourself with Joseph Williams, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, Lesson 2 (p. 8–19)¹. Going over your summary, **underline all of the verbs** you have used, and **circle all of the subjects**.
2. **Rewrite your summary, using Williams's suggestions** on how to make sentences clearer and more direct. Do not start from scratch! Simply change each sentence as you go. Some sentences won't require any changing – but many will.
3. **Rewrite your summary as a fairy tale.** For example, you could start with something like: "Once upon a time, Henry Jenkins wrote an article called 'Get a life! Fans, Poachers, and Nomads'. Get in to the tone of it, and have fun. Make sure to change not only your tone, but also your choice of words, your stylistic moves, and your sentence length.
4. **Rewrite your summary as a letter to an older relative.**
5. **Rewrite your summary as a letter/email to a friend.**
6. **Rewrite your summary as a tweet.** 140 characters – what can you get across?

Rationale/Learning Outcomes:

Most of the stylistic moves we make are not an issue of *right vs. wrong* so much as they are about *choices*. This exercise will hopefully give you an opportunity to expand your horizons as to what choices are available to you each time you

¹ Williams, Joseph and Gregory Colomb. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. 4th Ed. Boston: Longman, 2010. Print.

PMA 1112: Fans, Cult Audiences, and Camp

Instructor: Seth Soulstein

Fall 2013

write a sentence. Using the same source material should help put your focus on language, rather than on facts/content. Through doing this exercise, it is my hope that you:

- Develop a stronger sense of the stylistic choices available to you at any moment.
- Feel more confident that the choice you have made fits the occasion.
- Practice the difficult art of writing under various constraints.
- Familiarize yourself with the conventions of academic writing, and other forms of writing, on a word-and-sentence level.

EXPLANATION OF EXERCISE AND ITS UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

"Same Body, New Clothes" is a writing exercise in which students are asked to focus entirely on the style/presentation of their material, rather than on the content. Often, when deadlines loom and material is new, too much emphasis gets placed on a student's *ability* to communicate information, rather than the *ways in which* he or she presents that newfound knowledge. By using only a previous assignment (in this specific case, Assignment #2 – an exercise in summarization) as their source material, students are free to focus more deeply on style, and on the choices we can all make as writers to conform or not to conform to the conventions of different forms of writing (letters, emails, stories, tweets, etc).

Ultimately, the exercise is meant for both in-class and at-home work. Here it is presented in conjunction with Joseph Williams' *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, though it could certainly be adapted to work with a different style manual. There is ample opportunity for flexibility with the assignment – for example, for step #1, the student could circle/underline verbs and subjects in their own work, or could be asked to exchange papers with a classmate and mark up their partner's work (a useful in-class warm-up to then doing the rest of the exercise at home). On the other end, having completed the entire exercise, students can exchange their tweets (step #6) with a classmate, and see how much their partner is able to deduce about the original material, having read only the boiled-down tweet version. Of course, steps can be added or removed, if you would like, for example, students to write a newspaper article or blog post instead of a fairy tale.

ABSTRACT

"Same Content, New Clothes" is a writing assignment that asks students to focus entirely on style, rather than content, in their writing. By adapting their own assignments to forms of writing the conventions of which students may be more familiar with than academic writing, students may gain greater insight into their own abilities to make clear stylistic choices that reflect the demands of each form. In writing their own fairy tales, letters, and tweets, they might just have fun, too!

KEYWORDS

Style
Conventions
Adaptation
Clarity
Directness